

Message Text

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44

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-10 ISO-00 ACDA-10 CIAE-00 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 EB-07 NRC-07 OES-05 FEAE-00 DODE-00

PM-03 H-02 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 EPA-04

CEQ-01 ERDA-07 OMB-01 NASA-02 NSF-02 COME-00 /134 W
----- 093002

R 281822Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9853

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION IAEA VIENNA

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DEPT FOR OES, PASS NRC, ERDA, ACDA, EPA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TGEN, TECH

SUBJECT: GREAT NUCLEAR DEBATE FIZZLES IN PARLIAMENT

REF: PARIS 8675

SUMMARY: THE FRENCH GOVT'S PUBLIC CAMPAIGN TO DEFEND
ITS NUCLEAR POWER PROGRAM CLOSED QUIETLY THIS WEEK.

THE DEBATES IN THE ASSEMBLY AND SENATE ON MAY 14

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AND 20, WHICH WERE EXPECTED TO BE HIGH POINTS IN

THE CAMPAIGN, WERE POORLY ATTENDED, PRODUCED VIRTUALLY NO OPPOSITION TO NUCLEAR POWER, AND RECEIVED SCANT MEDIA ATTENTION. PARLIAMENTARIANS CRITICIZED ASPECTS OF THE GOVT'S PROGRAM, FOR EXAMPLE, THE LACK OF INFORMATION, FAILURE OF THE GOVT TO CONSULT, THE CHOICE OF AN "AMERICAN" REACTOR, AND THE IMPRUDENT SPEED OF NUCLEAR POWER DEVELOPMENT. HOWEVER, THE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES GENERALLY ACCEPTED THE NEED FOR NUCLEAR POWER. OPPOSITION, HOWEVER, PERSISTS AT THE LOCAL LEVELS AND IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE TO EXPRESS ITSELF ANOMALOUSLY VIA PROTEST DEMONSTRATIONS. END SUMMARY.

THE BUILD-UP

1. STARTING IN OCT 1974, THE FRENCH GOVT HAS UNDERTAKEN A THREE-FOLD PROGRAM TO ACHIEVE A PUBLIC CONSENSUS ON ITS AMBITIOUS NUCLEAR POWER PROGRAM: A) A "VAST" PUBLIC INFORMATION CAMPAIGN, B) CONSULTATIONS ON NUCLEAR SITING WITH REGIONAL AND LOCAL COUNCILS, AND C) CONSIDERATION BY PARLIAMENT (REFTEL). THE ENSUING NATIONAL DEBATE HAS BEEN ONE OF THE LIVELIEST IN FRANCE TODAY. MEDIA COVERAGE HAS BEEN CONTINUOUS AND HEAVY.

THE LETDOWN

2. THE NUCLEAR DEBATE WAS TO REACH A HIGH POINT DURING SENATE AND ASSEMBLY CONSIDERATION OF THE GOVT'S NUCLEAR POWER PROGRAM. THE STAGE WAS SET IN EARLY MAY BY SEVERAL DEMONSTRATIONS, A HUNGER STRIKE, AND TERRORIST EXPLOSIONS AT THE CONSTRUCTION SITE OF THE FESSENHEIM NUCLEAR POWER STATION. ON MAY 14, MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND RESEARCH MICHEL D'ORNANO OPENED THE DEBATE IN THE ASSEMBLY WITH AN HOUR-LONG SPEECH BEFORE NO MORE THAN 60 DEPUTIES, WHO SHOWED EVEN LESS INTEREST THAN THE SPEECH DESERVED. (BESIDES D'ORNANO, THE GOVT WAS REPRESENTED ONLY BY SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WOMEN'S AFFAIRS FRANCOISE GIROUD.) D'ORNANO DEFENDED THE GOVT'S DECISION TO ORDER 24,000 MEGAWATTS CAPACITY OF NUCLEAR POWER FROM 1974 THROUGH 1977 ON THE GROUNDS THAT 1) ENERGY GROWTH IS NECESSARY

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TO MAINTAIN ECONOMIC GROWTH; 2) ONLY NUCLEAR ENERGY OFFERS FRANCE AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPAND ITS ENERGY CONSUMPTION WITHOUT ENDANGERING NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE; 3) CONTINUED ECONOMIC GROWTH IS NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE SOCIAL REFORM. HE DEFENDED THE CHOICE OF THE LIGHT WATER REACTOR ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT WAS "THE INDUSTRIAL REACTOR" USED BY ALMOST THE ENTIRE WORLD, INCLUDING THE SOVIET UNION. HE

ANNOUNCED THAT THE COUNCIL FOR NUCLEAR SECURITY
WILL BE REINVIGORATED AND THAT AN INTERMINISTERIAL
COMMITTEE FOR NUCLEAR SECURITY WOULD BE FORMED AND
WOULD REPORT TO THE PRIME MINISTER AND WOULD BE
SUPPORTED BY A SECRETARIAT HEADED BY A SECRETARY
GENERAL.

3. FOLLOWING D'ORNANO WERE 28 INTERVENTIONS, MOST
MILDLY CRITICAL, WHICH TOOK THE DEBATE WELL INTO
THE MORNING OF THE NEXT DAY. THE ISSUES RAISED WERE
ESSENTIALLY THOSE DESCRIBED IN REF PARA 8. EMPHASIZED
WERE PROTESTS AGAINST THE "AMERICAN REACTOR," THE IN-

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SUFFICIENCY OF INFORMATION, AND THE LACK OF CONSULTATION. THE FOLLOWING WEEK, THE SENATE DISCUSSED THE NUCLEAR PROGRAM WITH ABOUT THE SAME INTENSITY AND WITH EVEN LESS MEDIA ATTENTION.

4. THE ONE CLEAR CONCLUSION EMERGING FROM THE LEGISLATIVE DEBATES WAS THAT NONE OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES OPPOSES NUCLEAR POWER PER SE. THE LEFT IS JUST AS COMMITTED AS THE GOVT TO THE OBJECTIVES SERVED BY THE NUCLEAR
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PROGRAM: FULL EMPLOYMENT, ECONOMIC GROWTH, NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE, AND SOCIAL REFORM. THUS THE OPPOSITION FOCUSED ITS ATTACK ON THE WAY THE GOVT WAS DEVELOPING NUCLEAR POWER. FAR MORE STIMULATING THAN THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES WAS THE NATIONAL TV PROGRAM "DOSSIERS DE L'ECRAN" OF MAY 20, WHICH DEALT WITH THE NUCLEAR ISSUES. A LEADING NUCLEAR CRITIC, PROF. LEBRETON, INTRODUCED A NEW ISSUE WHEN HE CRITICIZED THE FRENCH GOVT'S POLICY OF SELLING NUCLEAR EQUIPMENT TO THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES. WHY, HE ASKED, DO OIL-RICH, SUN-RICH ARAB NATIONS NEED NUCLEAR ENERGY EXCEPT FOR GAINING A NUCLEAR WEAPON CAPABILITY? CEA ADMINISTRATOR GIRAUD, APPARENTLY TAKEN OFF-STRIDE, DUCKED THE ISSUE WITH A HUFF, CHOOSING INSTEAD TO ATTACK LEBRETON'S PERSONAL CREDENTIALS AS A NUCLEAR SPECIALIST.

5. FUTURE: THE GOVT NUCLEAR SCENARIO SHOWS NO NEW EVENT BETWEEN NOW AND THE SUMMER VACATION PERIOD. IN ANY CASE, ACCORDING TO MINISTER D'ORNANO, AGREEMENT HAS ALREADY BEEN OBTAINED FROM LOCAL AND REGIONAL ASSEMBLIES FOR MORE THAN THE 9 NUCLEAR SITES REQUIRED BY EDF FOR THE PERIOD BEYOND 1977. THE PROGRAM FOR THOSE YEARS WILL BE DECIDED, AFTER THE SUMMER, BY THE NUCLEAR PLANNING COUNCIL. HOWEVER, LOCAL NON-PARISIAN OPPOSITION TO NUCLEAR POWER PERSISTS. WITH THE POLITICAL PARTIES GENERALLY IN FAVOR OF NUCLEAR ENERGY, THIS OPPOSITION IS LIKELY TO BYPASS ESTABLISHED CHANNELS AND TAKE ANOMALOUS FORMS OF EXPRESSION, CHIEFLY DEMONSTRATIONS. THE LOCAL OPPOSITION APPEARS TO HAVE LITTLE CHANCE OF ALTERING NATIONAL POLICY.

6. THE GOVT COULD CHOOSE TO REDUCE THE RATE OF NUCLEAR POWER DEVELOPMENT FOR THE PERIOD STARTING 1978. HOWEVER, SUCH A DECISION WOULD BE BASED LESS ON

PUBLIC OPPOSITION THAN ON THE STRONG POSSIBILITY THAT
ITS PROGRAM FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS IS TOO
AMBITIOUS. PROBLEMS IN DEVELOPING INDUSTRIAL
CAPACITY, TRAINING SKILLED PERSONNEL, AND RAISING
CAPITAL ARE ALREADY APPEARING THAT COULD DELAY
THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE TWENTY-FOUR POWER PLANTS
NOW ON THE BOOKS. A SLOW-DOWN MIGHT THUS
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BE A WELCOME RELIEF TO HARD-PRESSED FRENCH NU-
CLEAR INDUSTRY. IN ANY CASE, THE GOVT APPEARS
TO BE ON THE VERGE OF WINNING ITS GAMBLE;
IN WHAT WILL SURELY BE BILLED BY THE GOF AS
AN EXAMPLE OF GISCARDIAN EFFORTS TO OPEN UP
THE POLICY-MAKING PROCESS, CONSULTATION WITH THE
PEOPLE WILL PROBABLY, ALBEIT RELUCTANTLY, LEAD
TO SUPPORT FOR THE GOVT'S PROGRAM.
RUSH

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